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ART & MUSIC

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ROBERT S. DUNCANSON: 19TH CENTURY BLACK ROMANTIC PAINTER

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FOREWORD

"Love is my principle, order is the basis, and progress is the end."
—Robert S. Duncanson. (1871)¹

Among the American painters of the 19th Century who have been recently rediscovered is the long neglected Black painter, Robert S. Duncanson. Duncanson achieved considerable stature as an artist during his lifetime, not only in the United States but in England and Scotland, and his fame endures into the present day.

The fact that this very unusual man did most of his creative work before the Civil War, at a time when most of the members of his race were in human bondage, is an extraordinary phenomenon in the history of American art.

I had heard and read previously of Duncanson but this treatise was originally inspired by my accidental discovery in 1950 of two of his major works in Jefferson City, Missouri, where I taught art at Lincoln University.

Theo Haar, a local jeweler, phoned me one day and asked if I would clean and restore two oil paintings which he owned. As soon as I viewed them, I was enthralled with their beauty, and was certain that they were museum pieces of great value. They were in good condition, except for layers of dust upon them. I was still unaware that they were painted by Duncanson as the signature was obscured by the dust.

I took the paintings to my studio and proceeded to clean them. When I removed the dust and grime, the true beauty was revealed, and, to my amazement, also the signature, "Robert S. Duncanson, 1870." The paintings were "Dog's Head, Scotland," now in possession of the Boston Museum and "Lough Leane," now in the collection of Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee.

This discovery triggered a research project extending over twenty-seven years to write a book in depth on the artist.

Immediately upon viewing the paintings, I realized that they were museum pieces and magnificent examples of the mature style of the painter. With the dust removed, they were in excellent condition.

My first endeavor was the tracing of the history of the Jefferson City paintings and to discover how they came to be in Missouri. Mr. Haar said the paintings were given to him by a friend, Father Xavier Reker, a Catholic priest who had a parish in Taos, a village near Jefferson City. By 1950, Father Reker, a very elderly man, had moved to a parish

¹From a letter written by Duncanson, June 29, 1871.

in Mexico, Missouri. A trip was made to Mexico, Missouri, along with Mr. Haar, to interview Father Reker. He said the two paintings were given to him by a Mrs. Agnes Barnum in 1910 when he had a parish in Valley Park, Missouri.

It developed that Mrs. Barnum lived in Manchester, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis. After the death of her husband, Mrs. Barnum moved to a smaller home and gave the paintings to Father Reker. Tumulty Barnum, her husband, had obtained them from the estate of his brother, Phineas T. Barnum, the circus impresario. Tumulty Barnum operated the Old Star Overland Coach line to the West from St. Louis. He died in 1899 and bequeathed \$90,000 to the Catholic church in Valley Park.

The paintings were in the original rococo frames by a Cincinnati framer of the period. Interestingly enough, "View of St. Anne's River, Canada, 1870" which the St. Louis Museum purchased in 1966 from a private owner in Manchester was also originally owned by Tumulty Barnum. The investigation whetted my appetite to learn more about Duncanson and his works.

Duncanson is a shadowy figure in art history because he left behind very few personal papers for art historians to examine, or if he did leave any, they are now lost or destroyed. To add to the mystique about the man, most diligent searches over many years have failed to produce a photograph or self-portrait of him, in spite of the fact that in his early career he was a daguerreotypist and a popular portrait painter.

Delving for information about Duncanson proved a slow and tedious process, with bits of information being found and new Duncansons being discovered over a period of two decades.

My next step was to journey to Cincinnati. A modest research grant from Lincoln University enabled me to make three extended trips to the Ohio city in 1950, 1951, and 1952. I was extremely fortunate to interview Wendell P. Dabney, then about 90 years old, who knew more about Duncanson as a person than anyone living. Although he did not know Duncanson personally, over the years he had collected from older persons and relatives a great deal of information about him. Dabney was editor and publisher of "*The Union*", a Negro weekly, and was author of a book on prominent Blacks of Cincinnati. He also had in his collection four of Duncanson's paintings. I was most fortunate in securing this extended interview with Wendell Dabney in 1950 as the following year he died.

Edward Dwight, at that time Assistant Curator of the Cincinnati Art Museum, which possessed several Duncansons in its collection, had done extensive research on the artist and had located a number of previously unknown paintings by the artist. This gentleman was most

generous in sharing his research with me.

I was fortunate in locating in Cincinnati, Mrs. Ruth Showes, a relative of Duncanson and from her I was able to secure much information about the artist and his relationship to his family.

Examination of old newspaper files of the period revealed much about the artist and his activities. I visited the Taft Museum where his murals are located, and where in their files is additional information on the artist. In 1951 and 1952, I made two more trips to Cincinnati to research further.

In 1951, I made a trip to Detroit, where Duncanson painted and where he died. In the archives of the Detroit Institute of Arts with the assistance of the staff, more information was gleaned for my research. Old Detroit newspaper files revealed more information.

I learned that his second wife, Phoebe, several years after his death, moved with her family to Seattle, Washington. I made a trip to Seattle to search for relatives of Duncanson. Five Duncansons were listed in the city directory, among them a "Mrs. R.S. Duncanson". When I contacted Mrs. Duncanson by phone she was quite uncooperative and said she knew little of her late husband's family. However, there was an "Albert Duncanson" listed, who proved to be the elderly grandson of the artist. He was quite cooperative with my efforts to delve into the life of the artist.

Among other discoveries was the fact Duncanson was lefthanded, as the signature on his paintings indicated.

From Albert Duncanson, I obtained one of the few letters in existence by the artist. Another letter by Phoebe, his second wife, which described Duncanson's last days in the Insane Asylum in Detroit, was obtained. However, the search for a picture of the artist proved futile, although pictures of Phoebe, his son Mittie, his mother and Albert Duncanson were obtained.

In the decades that followed, bits of research and previously undiscovered Duncansons were found in such distant places as London, England; Connecticut and Oklahoma City, among others.

Duncanson emerges as a complex and, perhaps, frustrated man but a man who kept it well inside himself. He was well-liked by his fellow artists as described in the following:

He was a popular man, known as "Dunc" to his friends and fellow artists, who included such men as Farley, Lindsay, Sonntag, Beard, and Moseler and such patrons as Nicholas Longworth and other prominent people of Cincinnati.²

Duncanson might have left his mark on American art merely as a sort of curiosity — as a Black man attempting to be an artist at a most

²Cherry Grieve, Cincinnati *Times-Star*, December 17, 1922.

unlikely time — if his great skill and the sophistication of his paintings had not gained for him fame as one of the finer landscape painters of ante-bellum America. Certainly no artist of his time achieved more under such great handicaps.

Although his formal education was limited, he must have read extensively in English literature, as scenes from that literature were used in a number of his paintings. He seemed especially fond of Lord Tennyson, William Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott.

Duncanson was no doubt quite conscious of his mixed Scottish and African heritages. He was a much traveled man, having made trips to Scotland, England, Italy and Canada, where he exhibited and painted.

The slaves brought to the United States came from West Africa where the arts were well-developed through many centuries. The blending of African and Western artistic heritages in the man quite possible contributed to the uniqueness of his art.

I wish to make special acknowledgement to Professor C. A. Blue, whose astute criticisms and assistance in editing were extremely helpful; to the Cincinnati Art Museum for permission to use the research in the catalog of Duncanson paintings from "Robert S. Duncanson — A Centennial Exhibition" (1972) which added to the completeness of the book; and to the Detroit Institute of Arts for making available its research on the artist. I am deeply grateful to Edward Dwight, Director of the Utica, New York Art Museum, for making available to me his extensive research on Duncanson. I am also grateful to Dr. Lorenzo Greene for his helpful criticism.

—James Dallas Parks



Part one

DUNCANSON'S EARLY LIFE

In 1821, in New York state, the union of a Scotch-Canadian father and a Mulatto mother resulted in the birth of a boy child who was named Robert S. Duncanson. His destiny was to become one of the better nineteenth century American painters.

As a child Duncanson returned to Cincinnati, Ohio but difficulties of enrolling a Black child in the public schools caused his father to take him to Canada where he could obtain an education.

The vast virgin wilderness of Canada no doubt had great effect on his later love for landscape painting. There also originated his affection for English literature, of which he must have read a great deal in his life-time. Incidents from that literature served as the subjects of a number of his paintings.

Canada at that time was the final stop on the Underground Railroad and was the haven for escaped slaves. Why young Duncanson decided to return to the United States is not clear, but for his artistic career it was a very fortunate decision. However, his love for Canada remained throughout his life and he returned there many times to paint landscape.

In 1841 Duncanson returned to Ohio where his mother lived and where he had relatives on the side of his mother. There is no evidence to support the theory that Duncanson did any creative work in his youth in Canada as his first works appeared in 1842 in Cincinnati.

In 1841 we find Duncanson in Mount Healthy, Ohio, a village fifteen miles from Cincinnati where his mother lived. The white people of Mount Healthy were sympathetic to the abolitionist cause. Wilberforce, Ohio, a station on the Underground Railroad was close by. Duncanson worked briefly in one of the small industries in the village.

By 1842 Duncanson was working as an assistant in a daguerreotype studio at 28 West Fourth Street in Cincinnati, the same address at which James P. Ball, the Black daguerreotypist, had his fashionable establishment. Ball was one of the first photographers in the city and had learned his art in Boston. We may safely say that James Ball was Duncanson's mentor.

At the same time young Duncanson began to paint. Six of his paintings were displayed in the reception room of the photography studio. The clientele of the new art of daguerreotyping consisted of fashionable white people who were not adverse to sitting for their portraits by a talented young Black. It was here that the artist first attracted the attention of members of the Anti-Slavery Society, local merchants and artists, and the wealthy Nicholas Longworth, who

later became his patron and benefactor.

Duncanson was largely a self-taught painter. Early he learned the basic elements of painting, such as color, composition and figure painting, by copying paintings and prints. His "Trial of Shakespeare", dated 1842, was his first painting to attract attention to him in art circles of Cincinnati. It was a freely done copy of the work of an English painter, but for so young an artist was done with great skill.

An article in a Cincinnati newspaper gave interesting observations on it:

"The canvas (The Trial of Shakespeare) that is of such interest is about 30 by 40 inches, and critics deem it a magnificent work. Shakespeare is depicted at trial for poaching before Sir Thomas Lucy. Ann Hathaway, with her child, is close by his side as the game warden testifies. There are eleven human figures, two great hounds and the body of a deer in the painting."³

"The Trial of Shakespeare" was originally owned by the Gano family, and many years ago it was given to a faithful Negro servitor, who passed it on to the family from which F. C. Wright of Mount Healthy obtained it. It was in such battered state there was doubt it could be restored. However, it was restored and now hangs in the Douglas Settlement House in Toledo, Ohio.

The daguerreotype studio with its fashionable clients soon proved a fertile field for the painting of portraits by Duncanson. Still-life paintings of fruit and the like were in demand also. Duncanson now was able to make a living between photography and painting. Members of the Anti-Slavery Society were interested in him as an example of a Black with talent.

Among the prominent Cincinnatians whose parlors were graced by Duncanson's paintings in the middle part of the nineteenth century were James Foster, mathematics instrument maker, 384 West Third St.; Dr. W.H. Brisbane, corner Sixth and College; Samuel S. Smith, capitalist, 200 West Fourth St.; Thomas Farris, daguerreotypist, Melodian Building; James H. Oliver, Real Estate Dealer, 146 West Seventh St.; Calvin W. Starbuck, proprietor of Cincinnati Daily Times-Star; Charles Stetson, capitalist and president of O.L. and T. Company and Nicholas Longworth, statesman and industrialist at his residence at Pike and Fourth Street.

A recent critical review of one of Duncanson's portraits reflects on the excellence of his work:

"In his painting of Freeman Cary, Duncanson has brought out much of the pioneer spirit of the historic gentleman. The paintings of Freeman Carey and Dr. Bishop are unusually true to life, according to

³Cincinnati Commercial Tribune, October 3, 1913.

verification by Colonel Henshaw."⁴

There is no record of Duncanson having had formal training in an art school or serving an apprenticeship under a great artist. He learned the art of painting mainly on his own, from his association with many of the fine artists in Cincinnati and from his several trips to Europe where he observed and studied the works of the great artists. However, he never enjoyed the advantages of Juan de Pareja, the distinguished Black painter of 17th century Spain, who spent a lifetime as assistant in the studio of Diego Velasquez and profited from his instruction. Henry O. Tanner, the great American Black painter, who followed Duncanson in the 19th century was trained at the Pennsylvania Academy under Thomas Eakens and in Paris. Duncanson, despite these handicaps, developed his own quite original art.

Duncanson's career was closely intertwined with the Anti-Slavery Society of Cincinnati and the abolitionists of that city who were his patrons and benefactors. His connection with the abolitionists is evidenced by his portraits of James G. Birney, abolitionist Editor; Richard Sutton Rust and Charles Sumner. The portraits of Birney and Sumner are lost, but that of Rust is still preserved. While the Anti-Slavery Society never as a body aided in financing Duncanson's trips to Europe, individual members did contribute and did purchase his paintings.

Duncanson's position as a high Mulatto, so Caucasian in physical appearance that he could easily pass for a White person, is said to have hindered to some degree ordinary relations to both Black and White society. Members of his family had fears that he would pass over into White society in a place where his true racial identity was unknown.

The place in American society of such a person has usually been an awkward one. However, Duncanson, it appears, never severed his ties with his Black relatives in Mount Healthy, as is evidenced by a letter from him in 1870. He often returned to Mount Healthy and intermittently lived there throughout his life.

Duncanson's personal contacts as an artist were entirely with White people. The clientele for his paintings was entirely White. He belonged to the Art Club, exhibited freely and was well-regarded and accepted in Cincinnati art circles, although it was well-known that he was Black.

Sometime during those early years he married a Black woman and they had one child. Little is known about this first marriage and how it ended. Later he married Phoebe, a White woman, who bore him three children and who survived him. He continued his connection with the daguerreotype studio of James P. Ball at least part of the time from 1842 to 1854, when he became a full-time painter.

⁴George Winter, Cincinnati *Times-Star*, March 3, 1972.



Part two

DUNCANSON'S LIFE AS AN ARTIST

In 1846 he made his first trip to Detroit as an artist and opened a studio there for a time. A local newspaper announced he had painted the portraits of a number of Detroit citizens.

A newspaper article reveals Duncanson's activities in Detroit in 1846:

"We have intended for some time to call to the attention of our citizens to the paintings of Mr. Duncanson, a young artist who has been for some weeks here in Republican Hall, over James Watson's store. Mr. Duncanson has already taken the portraits of a number of our citizens, and designed several historical and fancy pieces of great merit. The portraits are very accurate likenesses and executed with great skill and life-like coloring. A Copy of the "School room", just finished from a picture in one of the annuals is full of the spirit and beauty of the original, and a portrait of a young bride, who recently came among us, is one of the most striking likenesses and tastefulness that we have seen from the pencil of so young an artist. Mr. Duncanson deserves and we trust will receive the patronage of all lovers of fine arts."⁵ The article as in the case of other articles in Detroit newspapers makes no mention of Duncanson being a Black man so it is evident that he did not bother to mention his true racial identity.

Between 1847 and 1848 Duncanson made his first trip to England and Scotland to view and study the works of the great European masters. To finance the trip he was aided by members of the Anti-Slavery society and Nicholas Longworth.

Later in 1848 on his return from Europe he painted the murals in "Belmont," the residence of Nicholas Longworth. Not since Juan de Pareja in 17th Century Spain, with his murals in the Benedictine Abbey at Bologna, had a Black man painted murals. It is very significant that the wealthy Nicholas Longworth selected young Duncanson to paint the murals in his home over a number of better known Cincinnati artists. Duncanson stayed at Belmont while he painted the murals.

In the Taft murals the artist fresh from his European trip veered somewhat from his landscapes in the Hudson River tradition and worked more under the influence of the European masters. Particularly from Lorrain he must have learned the soft and hazy effects seen in the paintings. The murals are mainly landscape in nature, with little use of the human figure. Each of the six large panels is enclosed

⁵Detroit *Daily Advertiser*, February 2, 1946.

in a painted rococo frame, so cleverly executed that from a distance an observer might mistake them for a real frame. Unfortunately, the murals were covered over with layers of wall-paper until 1930, when they were removed and the original murals were restored. They represent some of Duncanson's best work and reflect the enthusiasm engendered in him by his European trip. Belmont is now known as the Taft Museum. These murals established him firmly in art circles of Cincinnati.

Nicholas Longworth, Sr. was the most famous patron of Duncanson. Longworth was a devotee of the arts and purchased paintings and sculpture from many artists of the day, but he seemed to take a special interest in the career of Duncanson. At this time Longworth was reputed to be the wealthiest citizen of Cincinnati. While he was not a member of the Anti-Slavery society nor an abolitionist, he was highly sympathetic to the Blacks of the city and endeavored to help them. When Blacks had difficulty in enrolling in the public schools of Cincinnati, he built a school for them.

Nicholas Longworth was born in Newark, New Jersey in 1782. He died in 1863 leaving an estate of many millions. He derived his wealth from his wineries and land investments. He lived in a large stone residence on Fourth Street known at that time as "Belmont" but now is the Taft Museum housing a handsome collection of art. A letter from Nicholas Longworth, Sr. to Hiram Powers, the celebrated sculptor, well expressed his opinion of Duncanson:

June 12, 1852

"One of our most promising painters is a light Mulatto of the name of Duncanson. He is a man of great industry and worth. He may visit your city (New York) and is anxious to visit Europe.

Nicholas Longworth"⁶

The Taft Murals are obviously reminiscent of Duncanson's visit to Scotland. The scenes reveal the perceptiveness of the artist in organizing his compositions and orchestrating the delicate coloring. Despite the success of these murals they were the only ones painted by Duncanson in his career.

In the period between 1846 and 1852 Duncanson divided his time between Detroit and Cincinnati, and his paintings sold well. In 1851 Duncanson painted what is probably his masterpiece, "Blue Hole, Flood Waters, Little Miami River", now in the Cincinnati Art Museum. In this painting is exemplified the finest craftsmanship of the

⁶Letter from Nicholas Longworth to Hiram Powers, June 12, 1852.

artist. The luminous atmospheric effects and the delicate rendering of the trees and the landscape identify it as one of the finer examples of the Hudson River tradition. Here is best exemplified the idyllic quality that characterized so many of his landscapes. Several charming little figures accent the foreground.

During this period Duncanson was very productive. He painted among others, "Fruit Still-life" (circa 1849), now in the Corcoran Gallery, "View of Cincinnati from Covington", (circa 1851), "Uncle Tom and Little Eva" (circa 1853) and "Portrait of Henry Berthelot", both now at the Detroit Institute of Arts. In February of 1852, Duncanson exhibited at the Gallery of Fine Arts, Firemen's Hall, in Detroit.

"Uncle Tom and Little Eva" is the only known painting in which Duncanson painted a Black person. There is no element of protest against the institution of slavery in the painting. The figures are almost dominated by a back drop of typical Duncanson landscape of trees and water. Uncle Tom is portrayed as a corpulent well-fed figure holding the hand of Little Eva. There is an expression of contentment on the face of Uncle Tom, in spite of his plight. The painting was commissioned in 1853 and was based on an incident in "Uncle Tom's Cabin", by Harriet Beecher Stowe.

The picture was not well received by the Cincinnati press. Shortly after it was painted, the Cincinnati Commercial ran a review containing following observations:

"Uncle Tom according to the artist, is a very stupid looking creature, and Eva instead of a fragile and fading floweret, is a rosy complexioned, healthy child, not a bit ethereal. . . Tom has nearly all of her arm in his hand, as if intending to check the projected flight, and appears to inquire, 'What goin' dar for?'"⁷

In Detroit Duncanson was passing for White.

As mentioned before no write-ups mention his being Black, including his obituary when he died there. Evidently, Duncanson found it easier to secure commissions for his paintings if he did not reveal his racial identity.

A favorable review reveals his standing as an artist in Detroit:

"The paintings of fruit, etc. by Duncanson at the State Fair are beautiful, and as they deserve have elicited universal admiration."⁸

In 1853 Duncanson again traveled to Europe with the assistance of members of the Anti-Slavery Society and Nicholas Longworth. This time he was accompanied by William Sonntag, a prominent young White Cincinnati artist. Sonntag painted in the Hudson River tradition and had more influence upon the work of Duncanson than any other

⁷Cincinnati Commercial Appeal, April 21, 1853.

⁸Detroit Free Press, September 27, 1849, 3:1.

American painter. His travels covered not only England but also Italy. He evidently was overwhelmed by what he saw of classical, neo-classical art and the ruins of antiquity for on his return he painted a number of pictures that reflected these influences.

It is interesting that Thomas Cole, the Hudson River painter, went through a similar historical phase in his "Course of Empire", a series of five paintings. Cole, too, was fond of English literature but preferred Milton and Wordsworth. It is very possible that Duncanson knew Cole, as Cole had painted in Cincinnati at one time.

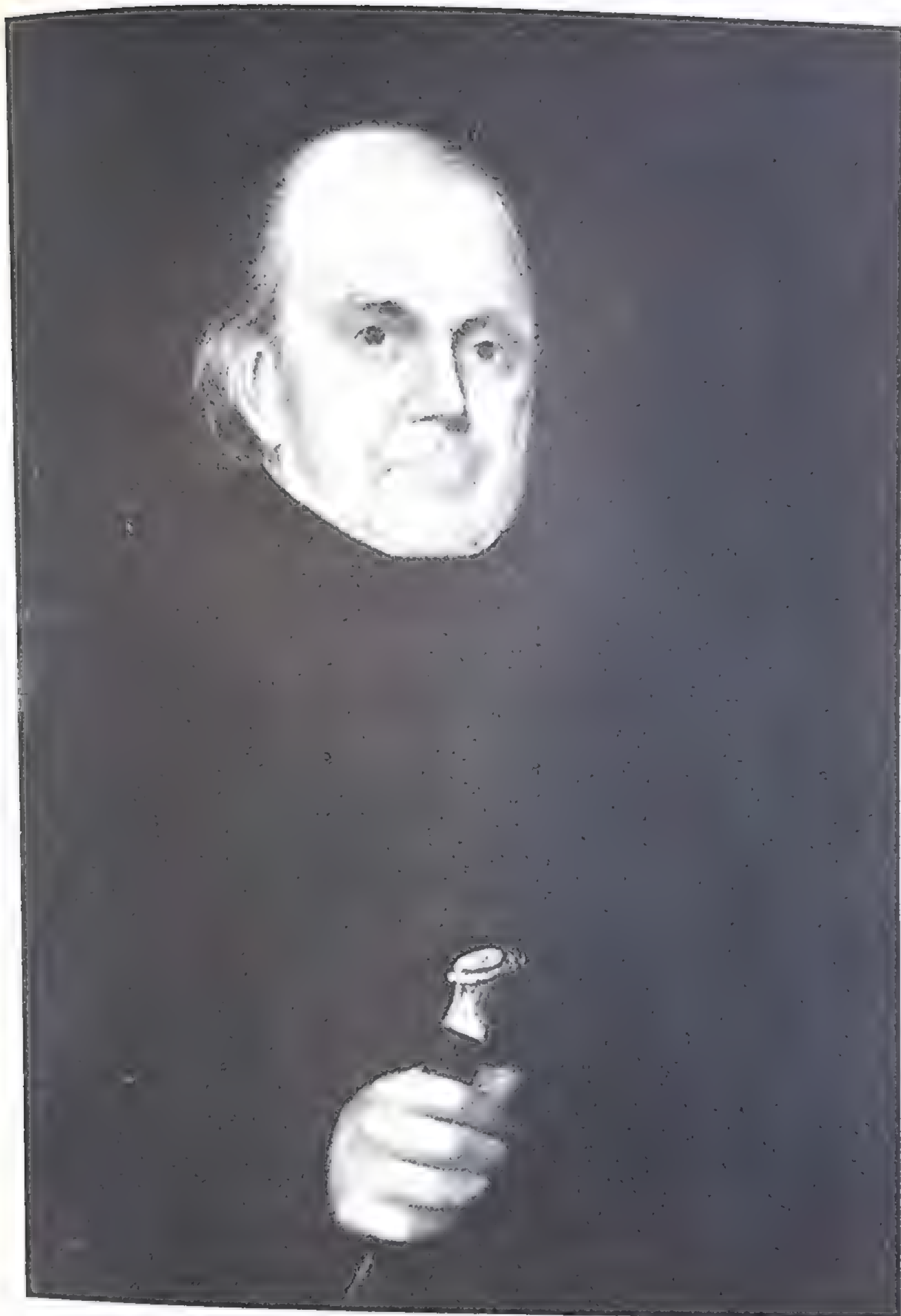
By 1854 Duncanson had returned to Cincinnati, where he rented a studio from William Miller (1835-1907), a miniaturist. Here Duncanson executed some beautiful Italian compositions from sketches he had made abroad, proving he made good use of his eyes while in Italy. By this time he had married again, his new wife being, Phoebe, a white woman.

His neo-classical landscapes of these Italian compositions, although artfully done were somewhat eclectic. "Landscape with Classical Ruins" (Recollections of Italy) (1854), in the collection of Howard University, Pompeii (1855), Hirchl and Adler Gallery, and "Landscape with Classical Ruins" from the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Newman of Bellbrook, Ohio are excellent examples of this phase of the artist's career. Obviously, Duncanson had learned much from European art and transferred some of it into his later Hudson River tradition landscape painting.

Cincinnati although a cultural center in the Middle West and a center of abolitionists, was also a focus of pro-slavery advocates. James Birney, the abolitionist editor, was attacked by a mob. Wendell Phillips was egged and Black people were generally persecuted. In 1838 there existed laws prohibiting the education of Colored children at state expense. In 1839 Negro homes were burned.

From 1832 to 1852 the Beecher family lived in Cincinnati. Lyman Beecher, a Yale graduate, was president of Lane Seminary on Walnut Hill. His son Henry Ward Beecher, received his education at Lane Seminary. It was here that his daughter, Harriet Beecher Stowe, wrote "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Because of abolitionist sympathies Lane Seminary was constantly threatened by pro-slavery forces. It is very likely because of Duncanson's close association with the abolitionists that he knew Harriet Beecher Stowe.

The chaotic and even violent race relations in Cincinnati must have deeply affected young Duncanson. The position of the high mulatto who could pass for White was an ambiguous one. To some they were known as members of the "Blue Vein Society", in between Whites and Blacks. This was evidenced by the fact a few Blacks of the Mulatto class were able to attend the City schools, perhaps because they were



HENRI BERTHELET

Attributed to Robert S. Duncanson

American

Canvas H 30' W 25'

Gift of Miss Mary Stratton, Milwaukee, Wis.

acc. 52,254

Courtesy of The Detroit of Institute of Arts



"UNCLE TOM AND LITTLE EVA"

Robert S. Duncanson—1853

American 1821-1872

Canvas H 27 $\frac{1}{4}$ W 38 $\frac{1}{4}$

acc. 49,498

Gift of Mrs. Jefferson Butler and Miss Grace R. Conover
Courtesy of The Detroit Institute of Arts



MRS. R.S. DUNCANSON
Phoebe, his second wife.

not recognized. Even in the slave society the Mulatto offsprings of the master were generally used as house servants, while the Blacks were used for heavier work in the fields.

Being treated as a White person in his travels and as a Black in his native city must have been confusing and frustrating to Duncanson. No racial consciousness, to say nothing of bitterness, was ever revealed in any of his paintings. He remained in his creative work a true romanticist, even an escapist, painting idyllic landscapes.

Much has been known and much has been written about the great number of paintings he created but little is known about the mystique of the artist as a person. Interviews with Wendell P. Dabney, Editor of the "Union", a Black Cincinnati weekly, shed considerable light on the artist. Dabney in 1950 was 90 years old, and although he had not known Duncanson personally, had interviewed many persons including relatives that had known the artist. Dabney had in his collection four paintings by Duncanson and one by Henry O. Tanner. Dabney described Duncanson as a handsome man of very fair complexion and, "with a way with the ladies."

Duncanson was highly regarded by his fellow artists in Cincinnati and moved freely in art circles. Mrs. Ruth E. Showes, a relative, told the author that there was always the fear in his family that he would go away and pass over into the White World.

Duncanson's mixed African and White blood is not a unique phenomenon among great artists. Juan de Pareja and Sebastian Gomez, Black artists of 17th century Spain were half Black and half Spanish. According to Thomas Craven, the art critic and historian, Gauguin had a Mulatto grandmother. James Audubon is listed in "Two Centuries of Black American Art" by David Driskell as a Black. Audubon was born in Haiti and his Black heritage is disputed by some.

Cincinnati was a propitious choice of Duncanson as a place to pursue his art. Already the city was famous for such artists as Hiram Powers, William Sonntag, James Beard, and others. Such painters as Thomas Cole, Caleb Bingham and James Audubon migrated there to pursue their art. Duncanson who was well regarded in art circles, no doubt viewed their works and had contact with some of them.

Being a freeman of colour and a respected artist, Duncanson was extended many amenities not accorded the average Black. He knew little first hand about slavery since, except for an occasional trip across the river to sketch, there is no record of his having traveled in the South. Duncanson was never an activist in the abolitionist movement but there is no doubt he was highly sympathetic to the cause and deeply affected by the existence of human slavery. He remained throughout his life close to those involved in the Anti-Slavery Movement.



Part three

DUNCANSON'S AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN SUCCESSES

By 1860 Duncanson, except for his travels, spent most of his time in Detroit, where he enjoyed excellent patronage for his portraits and landscapes. He bought a home for his family, consisting of his second wife, Phoebe, and their three children.

In 1865 he sailed again for England. It proved his most profitable visit to Europe both financially and professionally. He sold a number of his paintings. He exhibited in England and Scotland and received excellent reviews. Charlotte Cushman (1816-1876), the famous actress, was instrumental in his meeting with the Duchess of Sutherland who bought some of his paintings. Queen Victoria purchased one of his paintings which was hung in Balmoral Castle. The trip proved a triumphal tour for Duncanson.

"The Land of the Lotus Eaters", based on Lord Tennyson's poem, attracted wide attention. Lord Tennyson received him at his home on the Isle of Wight in appreciation of the painting.

A review of "The Land of the Lotus Eaters" reveals how well the work was received in England:

"America has long maintained supremacy in landscape art, perhaps indeed its landscape artists surpass those of England. We are not exaggerating if we affirm that the production under notice, "The Land of the Lotus Eaters" may compete with any of the British School. Duncanson has first established his fame in the United States and Canada. It is a grand conception of infinite skill, yet every portion of it has been studied with infinite care. This painting may rank among the most delicious that art has given us but it is also wrought with the skill of a master in the minutest details.

The scene represents Ulysses and his warriors visiting the Lotus Island on the way to Troy. The artist supplies us with an incident that gives point and value to the lovely valley surrounded with snow-topped mountains in which the simple natives, "The Lotus Eaters", dwell. A group is thus introduced on the borders of the river, amid richly dowered trees, the fruit producing kind. Some have gathered around the stately Greek, while others swim in the stream bearing harvest. Slender streams come down from the mountains, the bare and barren summits contrasting with the verdure of a hundred hues, at their feet, which overall is a glowing sunset that makes the whole a paradise on earth.



MITTEE AS A CHILD
Son of R.S. Duncanson, by second marriage.



FOREST LANDSCAPE

Robert S. Duncanson

Courtesy, Charles Fleischman, Cincinnati, Ohio

The picture is full of fancy. It is a grand conception, and a composition of infinite skill, yet done with the severest care."⁹

Certainly, the exhibitions of Duncanson on his visit to England and Scotland added to the prestige of American art. The acclaim with which he was received makes one wonder why he did not migrate to England, where he would be free of the problem of race and where paintings drew high prices. He did make a final visit to England and Scotland in 1870.

Of the number of paintings he sold in England only a few have been located. A notable exception is "American Forest Landscape" (1857), one of the finest examples of the work of Duncanson. The painting was placed for sale by the Richard Green Gallery in London in 1968. It came from the estate of the second Viscount Astor and had been hanging in Olivedon. It was purchased by Charles Fleischman, a wealthy art collector of Cincinnati, whose parents had been friends of Viscount Astor.

Another article throws further illumination on Duncanson's visit to England:

"In walking through the gallery of South Kensington the other day I met Duncanson, whom some of you remember as one who, a few years ago was trying to make himself an artist in Cincinnati and who already had produced a worthy piece of imaginative art in a picture of Tennyson's "The Land of the Lotus Eaters."

"Duncanson subsequently left Ohio and repaired to Canada where his color did not prevent his association with other artists and his entrance into good society. He gained much of culture and encouragement in Canada, retouched his "Lotus Eaters" and set out for England. In Glasgow and other Scotch cities he exhibited his pictures with success."

"He has been invited to London by various aristocratic personages. Among others, by the Duchess of Sutherland and the Duchess of Essex, who will be his patrons. He also received a letter from Lord Tennyson, the poet laureate, inviting him to his home on the Isle of Wight where he will go and take with him, "The Lotus Eaters". Think of a Negro sitting at the table with Lord and Lady Tennyson, Lord and Lady of the manor and mirror of aristocracy."¹⁰

By 1865 Duncanson was at the peak of his artistic powers. There was considerable demand for his portraits and landscapes.

"Water Nymphs" (1868), a painting now in the collection of Howard University is one of the finer later works of Duncanson. It has the usual landscape of trees and water with figures of young girls bathing in a stream. As was his custom the figures were subordinated to the

⁹*The Art Journal of England*, February, 1866.

¹⁰Moncure D. Conway, *Cincinnati Gazette*, November 24, 1965.

landscape.

A 1924 article traces the intriguing history of "Water Nymphs":
"An offer to purchase the Duncanson painting, "Water Nymphs", now owned by Philip Renner of Cincinnati, was made to Mr. Renner when he was here last week by Mrs. Lelia Walker Robinson of Irvington-on-the-Hudson, the richest Negress in Westchester County. The picture was painted by Cincinnati artist whose father was a Scotchman and his mother a Negress.

"Water Nymphs" was purchased by Samuel Thomas, a noted Southern sympathizer, and hung for some years in his residence at 4th and Lawrence Streets, now The Cincinnati Womens' Club.

"Lelia Walker Robinson's fortune was derived from a preparation to remove the kinks from hair of Negro women. She has a fine country home at Irvington and her daughter's wedding, which occurred last Fall, was one of the most elaborate and costly ceremonies ever held in the neighborhood of New York,"¹¹

In his last years Duncanson spent most of his time, other than that devoted to his extensive travels, in Detroit with his family. Detroit not only afforded him good patronage but was close to Canada and its wilderness, where he often went to paint landscapes.

By now he had developed his mature style of landscape painting and the prospect seemed bright that he would ascend to greater heights as a painter — perhaps to become the first Afro-American to become a major American artist.

However, it was not to be, as the dark curtain of insanity and death was slowly descending upon him. In 1870 he made a final trip to England and Scotland. On this visit he produced some of his finest works. By 1871 he was experiencing moods of melancholy and depression and his mind was becoming disturbed. The problem of race, of not being not quite fish or fowl, in a manner of speaking, is said to have been a contributing factor to his mental problem.

Nevertheless, Duncanson was still painting with great skill and exhibiting his works. Several paintings of stormy seacoasts in Scotland, perhaps reflecting the turbulence of his mind, were created at this time, in contrast to his usual serene and quiet landscapes.

An article in The Detroit Free Press that year reflects on one of his works:

"There were placed on exhibit, in the Western Art Gallery, two works by R.S. Duncanson, of Cincinnati. In the foreground is seen Peri (Spirit of the Air) standing on a cloud facing the angel at the gate of Heaven. It is an illustration of a portion of Moore's "Paradise and Peri". The atmospheric effects are startling and original. Another

¹¹James M. Allison, Cincinnati *Times-Star*, February 18, 1924.

picture entitled "Ellen's Isle", from Sir Walter Scott's "Lady of the Lake", is a superb work, and during the first day of the exhibition attracted a great deal of admiration. It represents the island and a portion of Loch Katrine with the sunlight shining full upon the scene. A mountainous background and rich glory of clouds, add a charming effect to the warm and glowing foreground, giving the whole picture a harmony of coloring and graceful outline that cannot fail to please the eye."¹²

Duncanson's untimely death occurred at the Michigan Retreat in Detroit in 1872 at the age of 51. His death occurred at the very peak of his artistic career.

The obituaries from the Detroit newspapers took the form of short sketches of his life, career and achievements:

"On Saturday last Robert S. Duncanson, a celebrated artist of this country, died at the Michigan Retreat, on Michigan Avenue, and his remains were interred on Monday last. He returned to the city about three months since. He had acquired the idea that in all his artistic efforts he was aided by one of the spirits of the great masters, and this so worked on his mind as to affect him not only physically but mentally. He was 51 years of age, a man of modest and retiring disposition, and a gentleman esteemed by all who knew him. He was born in New York State and Cincinnati was made his home. He gained fame both at home and abroad. He painted "The Land of the Lotus Eaters" after Tennyson's poem and when he visited Europe the poet laureate received him at his residence as a recognition of the great work. He also painted "Recollections of Italy", an exceedingly complete production, and another of his greatest efforts was his painting of "Paradise and the Peri". which was sometime exhibited at the Gallery of The Western Art Association, and greatly admired by those of our citizens who had an opportunity of viewing it. Mr. Duncanson visited Europe several times and found sale for his works. Through the efforts of Charlotte Cushman, some of his paintings were purchased by the Duchess of Sutherland. He was an artist of rare accomplishments and his death will be regretted by all lovers of his profession who knew him personally or by reputation".¹³

"Died in Detroit, December 21, 1872 Robert S. Duncanson, artist, formerly of Cincinnati, Ohio, aged 51 years. Funeral services at 10:00 a.m. Monday at 51 Center Street near corner of John R. Street".¹⁴

Evidently Duncanson, months before his death as his mental facilities waned, had returned to Cincinnati and his relatives. He owned a home in Detroit and Phoebe, his wife, and the children

¹²Detroit *Free Press*, September 16, 1871, 1:5.

¹³Detroit *Tribune*, December 26, 1872, page 4, column 1.

¹⁴Detroit *Post*, December 23, 1872, page 4, column 8.

remained there. On his last return to Detroit he was a patient at the Michigan Retreat.

A resolution from his fellow artists in Cincinnati on his death reveals the high esteem in which he was held:

“Resolved: That in his death his family has lost a devoted husband and father, our city one who has honored her name both at home and abroad, and art one of her most earnest and enthusiastic followers.

Resolved: That his long life of arduous toil and continuous effort to elevate the aims and use of landscape art command our admiration and though endowed by nature with the highest poetical conceptions and eminently successful in placing his chosen branch of art beyond the plane of the merely imitative, he deserves the greatest appreciation that he never forgot the kindly and generous sympathy for the humblest beginner who sought advice from the rich storehouse of his experience.

Resolved: That while we mourn his departure, and miss from among us the genial soul who cherished malice toward none, at least a measure of satisfaction is that the weary pilgrimage of his life is over and we can believe that his spirit waits not like “Peri at Paradise” but that the celestial landscape his imaginative pencil so vainly endeavored to depict is reality.

Resolved: That a copy of these resolutions be forwarded to the family of the deceased.”¹⁵

After 1876 the name Phoebe Duncanson no longer appeared in the city directory of Detroit. She and the children had moved to Seattle, Washington.

Duncanson accomplished many things in his relatively short career. Like his literary counterpart, Paul Laurence Dunbar, his life was cut short before the full fruition of his great talent. Duncanson was the very first Black painter to gain recognition in the United States and Europe. He was the first Black muralist in the United States. Today his paintings hang in such prestigious museums as the Boston Museum, the St. Louis Art Museum, the Cincinnati Art Museum, the Corcoran Gallery, the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Cleveland Museum as well as in numerous private collections.

In recent years Duncanson’s star has risen with the re-awakening of interest in the Hudson River School of painting and in the Black Studies courses in colleges and universities throughout America.

Duncanson has sometimes been criticized for the uneven quality of his works. Sometimes he reverted from works of genius to the ordinary. It must be remembered that Duncanson made his living

¹⁵Cincinnati *Inquirer*, December 31, 1872.

from painting and since, in most cases, they did not bring high prices, he had to paint a great number of works and hence all of them were not given the time and care of others. He covered the gamut of painting: landscapes, murals, portraits and still-life in order to make a livelihood.

Some of his early portraits were somewhat naive but in later works such as the portraits of Nicholas Longworth, Henry Berthelet and Lewis Cass he revealed that he had developed into a competent craftsman with the ability to secure excellent likenesses.

Duncanson's first love, no doubt, was landscape painting, and chiefly there will rest his laurels and his place in American art. In his landscape paintings in the Hudson River Tradition, Duncanson did have something very unique to contribute to American art. His perceptive study of European art during his travels enabled him to integrate elements of it into his own style, notably the hazy, luminous atmospheric effects so reminiscent of Claude Lorrain. However, in developing his own style most important was the charming and poetical mood that he was able to achieve in his paintings. More probably than any other Hudson River Tradition painter, Duncanson displayed this tendency in his paintings.

James A. Porter comments on Duncanson:

"I think that Duncanson must have produced a great deal; and to judge by the way his paintings stand up in comparison with romantic-naturalistic works of Cole, Durand, Bierdstadt and others I do think that he was one of the best of the Early American landscape painters."¹⁶

The 1972 retrospective show of his works on the centenary of his birth filled several galleries at the Cincinnati Art Museum. It evoked enthusiastic critical reviews in the press.

It is indeed fortunate that this Black artist, who overcame almost insurmountable odds to gain acclaim in America and Europe during his lifetime and then was neglected for so long a period, now has been resuscitated and honored as a significant figure in American art. Recently the Boston Museum and the St. Louis Museum have acquired works by the artist.

The saga of Robert Scott Duncanson remains one of the most remarkable and unusual in the annals of American art. His name and his magnificent works will live forever not only in Black art but in world art which knows no color or race.

¹⁶A letter dated August 16, 1949 to the author. The late James A. Porter was a former head of the art department of Howard University and was an art historian and painter.

Appendices

**A LETTER FROM
ROBERT SCOTT DUNCANSON
AND NOTE FROM
MRS. RUTH E. SHOWES,
A RELATIVE**

Cincinnati June 29, 71

I heard today, not for the first time, of your abusive language toward me. Reuben I have lived to the age of fifty years, I have toiled hard, and have earned and gained a name and fame in my profession second to none in the United States, and now as God decrees on some Angel smiling in the Sun has sent me a friend. A wealthy citizen. I am assured of any amount. My declining years will glide smoothly along. He is of the race that you despise. I despise no being that God has made for he made all good, you have stated that I have all my life tried to pass for white. Shame on you! Shame!! Shame!! Reuben. My heart has always been with the down-trodden race. There are colored persons in this city that I love and respect, true and dear to me. It does not follow that because I am colored that I am bound to kiss every colored or white man I meet. Hog's pick their company, and I have the same right. Reuben you and Mary have lived off your grandmother even Mr. Graham since his death, how have you and Mary paid her for her care and strict watchfulness over you. Shame!! Shame!! Shame!!! Reuben Need I point out the abuse that you have given to her who fed, clothed and succored you since infancy? I am here to watch you, and I will pass my arms between right and wrong mark what I say here in black and white I have no color on the brain all I have on the brain is paint. You seem to take a great deal on your puny shoulders. What have the colored people done for me? or what are they going to do to me? please answer? I care not for color: "Love is my principle, order is the basis, progress is the end." Reuben one step more in the course you have pursued and you fall. How often we see the total destruction of disobedient and God forsaken children. You have gone far enough in your abuse. I will write tonight to Mary. She too has lost that respect due me and I will make you both up. MY conscience does not upbraid me a single nite. YOU can understand by what I have wrote that I mean business.

R.S. Duncanson

Note: Because of his fair complexion and mixed parentage, the family feared that he would eventually go for White. Most of his associates were White artists and wealthy white people. He was reputed to have lived at the Longworth home at one time. The Mary referred to was evidently "Mary Harlan". Who Reuben Graham was is not clear but he is evidently a relative by marriage, as Duncanson's grandmother married a Graham who died, and Reuben Graham may have been a step-son of his grand-mother.

MRS. RUTH E. SHOWES,
A RELATIVE

**A LETTER CONCERNING
ROBERT S. DUNCANSON'S
ILLNESS FROM PHOEBE,
HIS WIFE**

EXCERPTS (Letter concerning Robert S. Duncanson's illness) (Punctuation and spelling verbatim)

51 Centre St Dec 17th 1872

Mrs. Harlan

Dear Friend.

I have delayed too long. Writing to you and now I have mislaid your letter so I do not even know the date.----- We need often to think about you if you should get sick, and Robert spoke of it only a little while before his own illness. I went out today, to hear from him. They do not allow me to see him any more, he was worse after my seeing him the other time. The sister in charge of him said today that he has been entirely unconfined since last Thursday, and is very quiet and natural. His physical health has improved and he eats and sleeps, and walks in the hall, with other quiet ones. I had Berta with me for the first time. She thinks it is very nice out there, and like the sister very much. She thinks a great deal about her papa and worries about him too, and sometimes comes to me and says, "mamma I can't help it, I feel so bad for papa, I must cry." When I told he would like to see her she cried as if heart-broken. One would not expect so much feeling from one so young, and mild as she is.----- I am so unsettled I cannot do anything now. I had not been to the Retreat for 2 weeks until today. I found that going so often was having a bad effect on me, so I quit. I do not know what opinion the Drs now have of Robert, but I wont allow myself to have any hope for fear I may be dissappointed. I made up my mind for the worst long ago.----- With much love I am yours affectionately

Phoebe A.L. Duncanson

Note: Mrs. Harlan was Albert L. Duncanson's grandmother and R. S.Duncanson's mother who had re-married.



MRS. R.P. GRAHAM
The relative who helped Duncanson in his early career.



MITTIE DUNCANSON
Duncanson's son by his second marriage.

CHRONOLOGY OF ROBERT S. DUNCANSON

- 1821 Born in New York State. Spent boyhood in Canada where he received a grammar school Education.
- 1841 Returned to Mount Healthy, Ohio and his mother.
- 1842 Painted "The Trial of Shakespeare" and worked as an assistant in a daguerreotype studio.
- 1845-1848 Painted in Cincinnati and Detroit.
- 1848 First trip to Europe financed by Nicholas Longworth and members of Anti-Slavery society.
- 1848-1849 Painted the murals in the Taft Museum.
- 1850 Painted in the White Mountains.
- 1852 Exhibited at Gallery of Fine Arts, Fireman's Hall, Detroit.
- 1853 Traveled in Europe with William Sonntag aided by members of Anti-Slavery Society.
- 1855 Gave up work in daguerreotype studio and became a full-time painter.
- 1858 Purchased a home in Detroit.
- 1861 Began painting "The Land of the Lotus Eaters".
- 1862 Painted in Minnesota and Vermont and visited Canada.
- 1865 Visit to England and Scotland. Exhibited in Glasgow and London and sold a number of his paintings.

- 1870 Returned to England and Scotland and painted "Dogs
Head, Scotland" and "Lough Leane"
- 1872 Died in Michigan State Retreat in Detroit.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

I am indebted to Edward Dwight, director of Utica, N.Y., art museum and to use of material from "Robert S. Duncanson, A Centennial Publication" (CINCINNATI ART MUSEUM, 1972) for assistance in assembling this chronology.

APPENDIX

CATALOG OF WORKS BY ROBERT S. DUNCANSON

The Ox Cart, 1842

Charcoal on paper. Collection of E.H. Dwight

Watermelon and Peaches, ca. 1842

Pastel on paper. Collection of William Kemper

Transportation in Early Cincinnati, 1842

Robert Miller Collection

Trial of Shakespeare, 1843

Collection of Douglass Settlement House, Toledo, Ohio.

Light and Shade, 1845

Collection of Harriet Beecher Stowe House, Cincinnati, Ohio

Portrait of Louis Benjamin Berthelet, 1846

Collection of W.T. Berthelet

Portrait of Wm. Berthelet as a Child, 1846

Collection of W.T. Berthelet

Portrait of Mrs. Edward Porter Campbell, June, 1846

Collection of Mr. R.C. Bridgeman

Winter Landscape, 1846

Collection of E.N. Pike

Elizabeth Longworth Potter, ca. 1846

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Morris Mason

Drunkard's Plight, 1846

Collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts

Portrait of Lewis Clark, 1846
Michigan Department of State, Lansing

Portrait of James G. Birney, 1846
Whereabouts unknown

Murals,
Front Hall, Taft Museum, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1848-50

Western Hunters Encampment, 1848
Whereabouts unknown

Landscape with Hawk
Collection of Pat O'Brien, Erlanger, Ky.

The New World, 1849
Collection of Frank Patria

Fruit Still Life, 1849
Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C.

Portrait of John Northrup, ca. 1850
Whereabouts unknown

Blue Hole, Flood Waters, Little Miami River, 1851
Collection of Cincinnati Art Museum

View of Cincinnati, Ohio from Covington, Kentucky, ca. 1851
Collection of Cincinnati Historical Society

Portrait of Twin Children, 1852
Whereabouts unknown

The Ford, 1852
Collection of Ralph Van Matre

Landscape with Shepard, 1852
Private Collection, Kentucky

Duck Shooting, 1852
Whereabouts unknown

Portrait of Agnes, 1853
Whereabouts unknown

- Romantic Landscape*, 1853
Collection of Henry M. Fuller
- Landscape with Picknickers*, 1853
Whereabouts unknown
- Land of Lotus Eaters*, 1853
Sweden—Collection of His Royal Majesty, King of Sweden
- Uncle Tom and Little Eva*, 1853
Collection of Detroit Institute of Arts
- The Gamblers*, ca. 1854
Whereabouts unknown
- Summer Retreat of Horace and Virgil*, ca. 1854
Whereabouts unknown
- Landscape With Classical Ruins*, 1854
Collection of Howard University
- Portrait of Freeman Carey*, 1855
Whereabouts unknown
- Hiding of Moses*, 1855
Collection of West End branch of Y.W.C.A., Cincinnati, Ohio
- Portrait of William Carey*, 1855
Whereabouts unknown
- Pompeii*, 1855
Hirschl and Adler Gallery
- Remembrance of Scenes from Auerbach*, 1856
Private Collection
- Portrait of Mrs. James Drew*, 1856
Collection of Mrs. John M. Powers
- Valley Pasture*, 1857
Collection of Douglass Collins
- Forest Landscape*, 1857
Collection of Charles Fleischman

Portrait of Nicholas Longworth, 1858
On loan to Cincinnati Art Museum

Peaceful Valley, 1858
Whereabouts unknown

Portrait of Richard Rust 1, 1858
Collection of Rust Family

Landscape with Classical Ruins (Sibillia), 1859
Collection of Rev. and Mrs. A. H. Newman

Portrait of Charles Sumner, 1860
Whereabouts unknown

Fruit Peace, ca. 1860
Detroit Institute of Arts Collection

Valley of Lake Pepin, Minnesota, 1862
Collection of Cleveland, Ohio Museum

Maiden Rock—Pepin, Minnesota, 1862
Collection of Amherst College

"Faith", 1862
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Bates

Minnenope Falls, Minnesota, 1862
Collection of Ralph Van Matre

Lancaster, New Hampshire, 1862
Collection of Ralph Van Matre

Minnihaha Falls, 1862
Collection of Ralph Van Matre

Niagra Falls, 1863
Whereabouts unknown

Lakeside Outing, 1863
Collection of Miss T. C. Noble

Twilight Landscape, 1864
Collection of Albert Werner

Water Falls of Montmorency, 1864
Collection of Frank W. Stout

Vale of Kashmir, 1864
Collection of David Silvette

Sheep, 1866
Collection of Wm. T. Earls

Landscape with Tower, 1867
Whereabouts unknown

Lock Long, 1867
Collection of Mrs. Gibson Yungblut

Coilintogle's Ford, 1867
Whereabouts unknown

Landscape with Fantastic Figures, 1867
Collection of Elizabeth Jergens

Water Nymphs (The Surprise), 1868
Collection of Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Woodland Pool, 1868
Whereabouts unknown

Morning in the Highlands, 1868
Whereabouts unknown

The Caves, 1869
Collection of Richard Rust III

Waiting for a Shot, 1869
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Warren S. Griffin

Landscape with Horsemen, 1869
Whereabouts unknown

Dog's Head, Scotland, 1870
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.

View of St. Anne's River, 1870
Collection of St. Louis Art Museum

Ellen's Island, 1870

Collection of Ralzemond D. Parker

Lough Leane, 1870

Collection of United Church of Christ

Undated Works

River Scene

Collection of Murdoch M. Williams

Fall Fishermen

Butler Institute Collection, Youngstown, Ohio

Landscape

Collection of Carrol Green

Mexican Landscape

Whereabouts unknown

Sunset Landscape

Collection De Vant Crissey Gallery, Marietta, Ga.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

I am deeply indebted to Edward Dwight, director of Utica, N. Y. Art Museum; to the Detroit Institute of Arts and to the Cincinnati Art Museum for use of material and catalog of Duncanson in its publication, "Robert S. Duncanson. A Centennial Publication," (1972), to which I have added the results of my many years of search for Duncansons.

Duncanson was a prolific creator in the 29 years of his career and, no doubt, a number of his paintings are lost or yet undiscovered.



PORTRAIT OF MRS. EDWARD PORTER CAMPBELL
(Margaret Murphy), 1846
Mrs. Thomas Rees, Andover, Mass.
16½" x 19⅝"



"THE DRUNKARD'S PLIGHT"

Robert S. Duncanson—1846

American

Canvas H 15 $\frac{1}{4}$ W 19 $\frac{3}{4}$

acc. 44,277

Gift of Mess Sarah H. Sheridan

Courtesy of The Detroit Institute of Arts



MURAL—OIL ON PLASTER
Robert S. Duncanson
American, 1821-1871
Southeast—Long Hall
Courtesy of The Taft Museum



MURAL—OIL ON PLASTER

Robert S. Duncanson

American, 1821-1871

Southeast—Main Entrance

Courtesy of The Taft Museum



MURAL—OIL ON PLASTER
Robert S. Duncanson
American, 1821-1871
Southwest—Long Hall
Courtesy of The Taft Museum



MURAL—OIL ON PLASTER
Robert S. Duncanson
American, 1821-1871
Southeast—Long Hall
Courtesy of The Taft Museum



MURAL—OIL ON PLASTER
Robert S. Duncanson
American, 1821-1871
Northwest—Main Entrance
Courtesy of The Taft Museum



MURAL—OIL ON PLASTER
Robert S. Duncanson
American, 1821-1871
Northeast—Long Hall
Courtesy of The Taft Museum



MURAL—OIL ON PLASTER
Robert S. Duncanson
American, 1821-1871
Northwest—Long Hall
Courtesy of The Taft Museum



MURAL—OIL ON PLASTER

Robert S. Duncanson

American, 1821-1871

Southwest—Main Entrance

Courtesy of The Taft Museum



LANDSCAPE WITH HAWK
Collection of Pat O'Brien



BLUE HOLE, LITTLE MIAMI RIVER

Robert S. Duncanson ca. 1817-1872

American, Cincinnati

oil/canvas H 29 $\frac{1}{4}$ " W 42 $\frac{1}{4}$ " 74.3 cm 107.4 cm

acc. 1926.18

Gift of Norbert Heermann

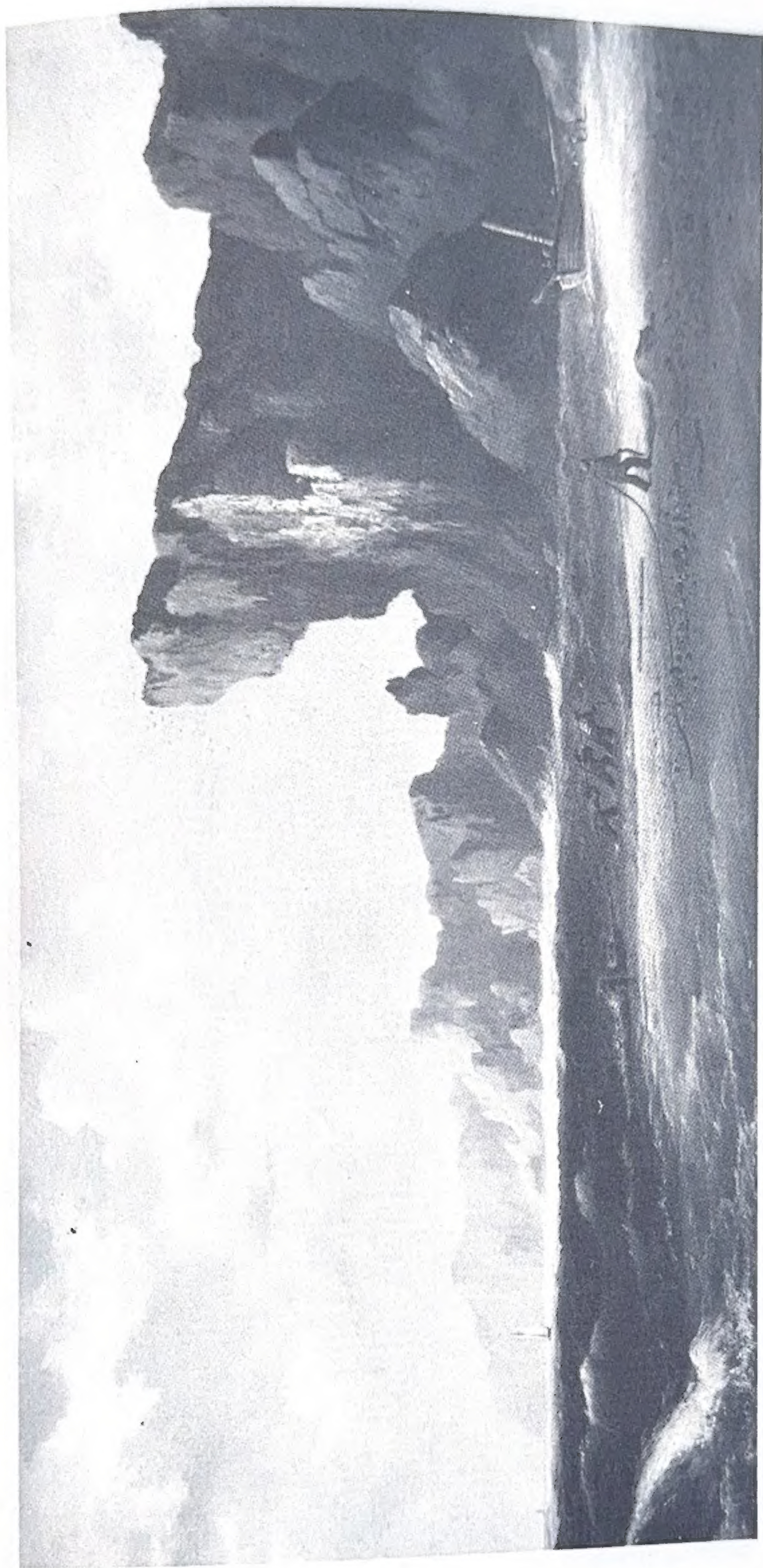
Courtesy of Cincinnati Art Museum



PORTRAIT OF MRS. JAMES DREW (1856)
Courtesy of Taft Museum



"WATER NYMPHS"
Howard University Collection

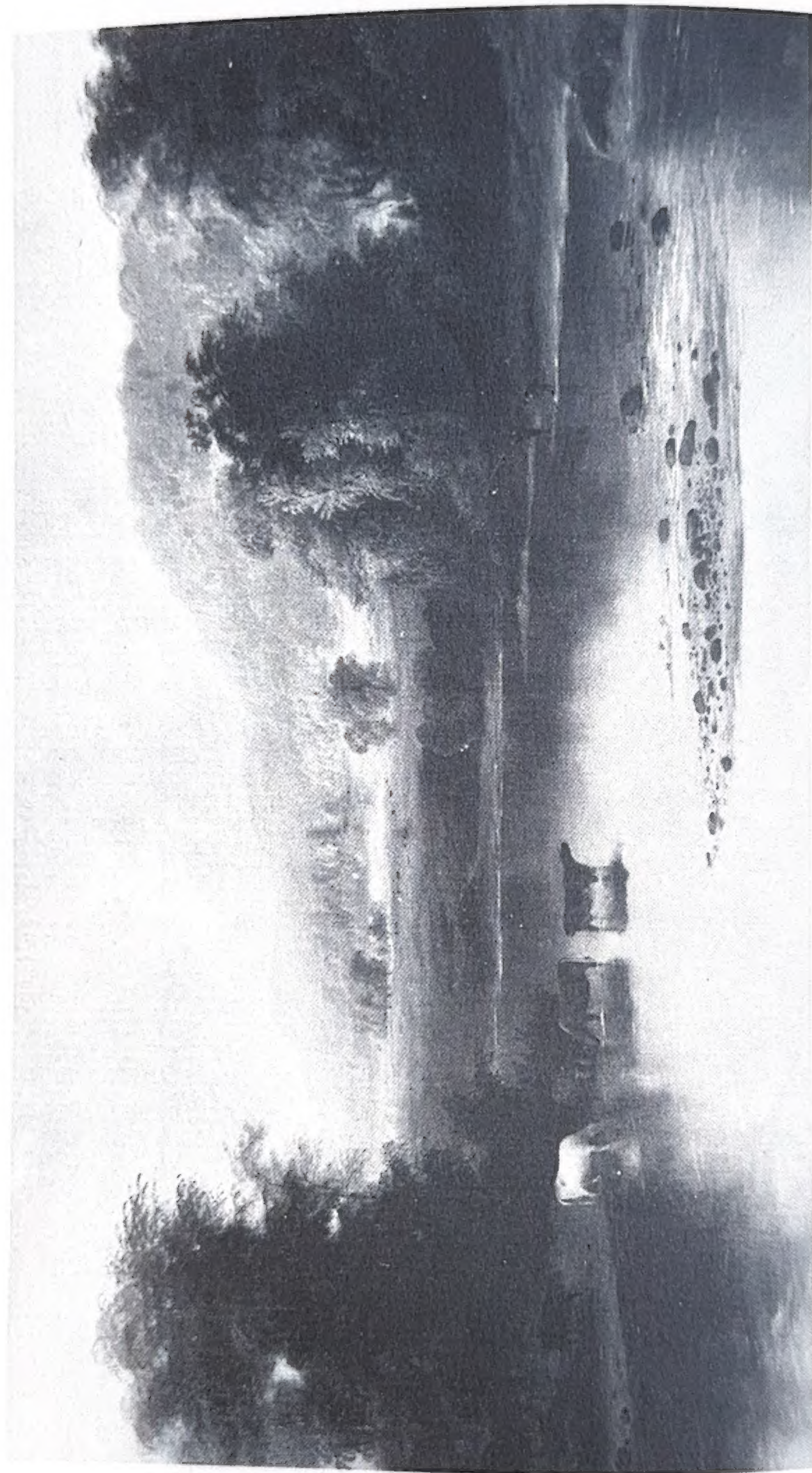


DOG'S HEAD OF SCOTLAND, 1870

Robert S. Duncanson

Emily Ainsley Fund (1970)

Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.



"VIEW OF ST. ANNE, RIVER, CANADA"
St. Louis City Art Museum



SUNSET ON NEW ENGLAND COAST, 1871

Robert S. Duncanson

Gift of Mrs. Albert Bettman

Courtesy of Cincinnati Art Museum



RECOLLECTIONS OF ITALY, 1854

Robert S. Duncanson
Collection of Howard University